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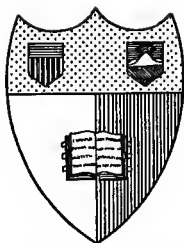
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# *Strike*

A Play  
by  
John Metcalfe



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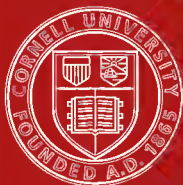
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# T' STRIKE

*By*

JOHN METCALFE

Author of "Yorkshire  
Dialect Plays."

1921

Percy Lund, Humphries & Co., Ltd.  
Bradford

NOTE.—Although the aspirate is used, it should never be sounded.

*Characters*

RUBE BUSSEL      The Village Chimney  
Sweep.

BILLY BUTTON    A Lazy Tyke.

SOPHY BUSSEL    The Sweep's Wife.

*Period of Play*  
*80 years ago.*



*Scene*

A cottage living room. The sweep sitting in front of the fire looking as gruff and glum as he is able. His wife going about her work and casting side-long glances at her husband. A sheep-head clock wags on the wall. It strikes nine.



## T' Strike

*Sophy*—Does ta see what time it is ? Hes ta noa jobs on to-day ? Tha's forgotten abaht t' Drakes.

*Rube*—(*In a severe tone.*) Ah've seen t'clock Sophy. An' ther's a fehew jobs abaht. An' Ah'm noan likely to forget t' Drakes, t'skinny beggars. (*Sophy looks with curiosity at Rube.*) Nah then, thee go on wi' thi wark. Bud if tha really *mun* know ivvery thing, Ah'm on t'strike.

*Sophy*—(*Incredulous.*) Tha'rt what ?

*Rube*—On t'strike Ah tell the.' Tha knows what *that* is sewerlee.

*Sophy*—Aye Ah know what it is hard eniff, at a mill, er when t' masons er t'joiners Strike. Bud tha hezzent a regler gaffer onnywhere, so Ah don't see hah tha'rt bahn to manidge to be on't t'strike.

*Rube*—Nou that's just wheer it is, that's what Ah'm set here for. As long as Ah go aht shahtin' up an' dahn, "Sweep sweep, onny chimleys to sweep " Ah hev'nt a chance. Ivverybody's t'maister on mh. Nou, Ah don't know hah

Ah's go on, bud Ah've made mi mind up at fowks bahn to hettah come seekin' me ahsteead o' me seekin' them. An' Ah'm bahn to hev' a regler price. An' its bahn to be what I chaarge, an' neht just what they've a mind to gie.

*Sophy*—Bud hah will they knaw? Tha hezzent tell'd 'em.

*Rube*—Nou, an' Ah'm neht bahn to dew, wol they come seekin' mh an' neht then, nobbut to t'better soart; some o' t' low dahn devils 'at ca'nt thoil meh t'sooit, 'll hettah sweep ther awn, er smooer.

*Sophy*—Who ivver's putten it into thi heead?

*Rube*—Noabody : it's been churnin' up in mh fer monny a year, ivver sin' mi fatther deed. Ah sud nivver ha' fol-lerd sweepin' bud fer him; Ah'd allus aimed bein' a mason, bud nowt 'ud do bud Ah mud go up an' dahn wi' him an' help him. He hed some sort of a notion 'at ther wor a safe livin' i' it. T'weather did'nt brek ye off, an' all that sort of argiment he used to hev. So Ah gav' in, i' t'end, bud it wor agean t'grain. I' other jobs yeh dew

get a bit mucked up happen bi neet, bud i' sweepin' ye're mucked up first go off. An if Ah meet onnybody Ah knaw, 'at's ivver so thick wi' meh, they wea'nt, er they dar'nt come near mh 'cos o' t'sooit. Ther's t'parson yonder, he's a varry nice sort of a man, wod'nt hurt a flea, an' he's all full o' manners an' sich wi' other fowk, shakin' hands, neht just wi' t'women, bud wi' t'men an' t'barns. When he meets me he smiles an' nods, an' ses " Good mornin' Mr. Bussel " bud he does'nt shak hands wi' me, neht so. An' a lot o' fowk if they hed ther way, 'ud shove meh off o' t' cawsah inta t'middle o' t'road. In fact Ah'm just a public nuisance.

*Sophy*—Nah Rube, just dew as ta likes, if tha can get more fer thi wark bi strikin' tha's no 'casion to be flaid o' me grumlin'. Bud it's noan onnybody's fawt i'particular, 'at I knaw on, 'at t'sooit happens to be black an' muckies owt it gets on tul, an' that's t' top an' boddom of what tha'rt grum'lin' at. An'as fer t'parson, Ah thowt he wor varry nice abaht sweepin'. Ah

remember t'first time he called *when* he was new come, he said 'at bein' a sweep wor doin' a varry useful and necessary bit o' work, or summat like that put i'fine talk. (*Short pause*). Tha ar'nt bahn to frame then? What tah bahn to dew? Sit at t'harstone an' sulk, er don thisen up an' walk aht same as it wor Sunday? Bud if tha did that fowk 'ud think tha wor poorly. That wodd'nt dew.

*Rube*—Did'nt Ah tell the'? Ah'm on t' strike. When onnybody strikes, as far as Ah knaw, he gies ower dewin' what he calls his wark. If Ah wor'nt on t'strike Ah sud be bawlin' up an' dahn t'streets an' t'roads shahtin' "Onny chimleys want sweepin'" an' if onny body wor gooid eniff to let meh go an' try to smoor misen, an' happen burn misen, t'uptak o' t'job 'ud be sixpence er a shillin' an' a beg o' sooit; an' ten to one if they could bide i' t'hoil wol Ah wor agate, they'd be grumlin' an' grahlin' 'at mh 'cos Ah hed'nt been an' wockened 'em up abaht five o'clock, so as Ah cud dew it afore they let t'fire. An' if I hed goan at five they'd ha'

grummled 'cos Ah'd wockened 'em. Tha thinks Ah've nowt to put up wi' Ah—tha say, bud it's neht just strikin' agean t'brass they gie me er owt to gie meh bud at t'humbug 'at Ah hettah tak. (*Rube has grown quite cross, speaking as if he were addressing his customers*).

*Sophy*—Well, it's n'use the' gettin' aht o' temper wi' me. If all t'chimleys wor mine, and I hed brass fer tackkin' on, tha'd get ten shillin 'er a pahnd for ivvery one tha swept. An' if I made t'sooit an' tha wanted it to be onny partic'lar colour, that colour it 'ud hettah be. Bud as chimleys is'nt mine an' t'sooit macks itsen, it seems to me we're abaht bet wi' t' job. Bud if thy strikin' 'll alter things, so weel an' gooid.

*Rube*—Nah Sophy, tha knaws it's just as mich fer thee as fer misen 'at Ah've stuck mi rig up. Mi fatther used to say 'at he'd a monopoly, 'at fowk couldn't screw him dahn same as they did t'grocer wi' his flahr, t'cobbler wi' his booits, an' t'milkman wi' his milk, just wi' goin' to t'other chap i' t'same line an' settin him agean t' owd un.

An' Ah used to think ther mud be summat in it, bud if ther is I've nivver gotten hod on 't yet. An' they could'nt screw him dahn, fer he wor at t'boddom to begin wi'. Bud Ah'm bahn to try it on an' see what Ah can dew.

*Sophy*—Nah Ah've nowt agean the' strikin', well nowt, that's sayin' to' mich fer Ah hev' one thing. Ah wish tha could dew thi strikin' somewheer else astead o' t' harston.

*Rube*—(*getting up in a temper*). Nah Sophy Ah did'nt think Ah sud heh thee to feyt. If Ah hev' Ah's hettah alter mi tactics.

*Sophy*—Sit the' dahn an' do'nt be so shirty wi' thi tactics. Tha knows tha'll noan hev'me to feyt. Noan so. If ta likes we'll form a union, an' then tha'll see who's t' first blackleg, an' it'll neht be me.

*Rube*—(*sits down but does not seem to know how to take his wife's remarks*). Tha ar'nt laughing at meh? fer Ah'd rayther tha com aht i' thy true colours if tha'rt a traitor.

*Sophy*—Rube, Rube. Ther's no dewin' nowt wi' the' to-day. Tha must ha'

gotten off t' reng side o' t' bed this morning. Are ta flaid Ah s'al be slippin' aht wi' thi brushes, an' sweep one or two for nowt? Just to breck t' strike up.

*Rube*—Ah do'nt know what Ah'm flaid on. Bud if tha'd go on wi' thi wark an' leave me to manage this job, it 'ud be as weel.

*Sophy*—All reyt. An' if it wea'nt mack onny difference to t'strike, if tha'd just skift awther to one side er 'tother so as I can get to t'oven and pan, Ah sud be pleased. (*Rube moves to one side*).

*Rube*—Sophy, Ah wish tha wodd'nt talk to meh same as Ah wor a barn 'at hed ta'en t'snips 'cos it cudn't hev' its Sunday close on to laik i' t'muck, er some mack o' silliness er other. Ah know tha's a sharp tongue i' thi heead, an' 'at tha can mack fun aht o' t'piece if ther's noan handy abaht. But this is'nt a fun breedin' job fer me, ner fer thee, if ta lewks reyt at it.

*Sophy*—Nah Rube, what does ta want meh ta dew? Ah'll ommust dew owt ta please the'. If ta wants meh to sit mh dahn at t'other side o' t'fire an' help

thee to stare into t'asnewk (*Pause*)  
*Ah'll dew* it ; er if tha'd like mh to put  
mi bonnet and shawl on and go aht an'  
kal a bit wol tha does t'ahse wark, an'  
gets thi temper dahn, Ah'll gladly dew  
that.

*Rube*—If tha doesn't give ower doncin'  
abaht mh wi' thi leet talk Ah do'nt  
knew *what* Ah s'al dew. It's a serious  
job is this, neht a Punch an' Judy  
Shew. It's all reyt thee stoppin' here  
wol I go aht an' bring t'livin' in. I've  
to face t'world an' tha hes'nt. If it  
does as it likes wi' me, thy livin', same  
as mine 's thin an' poor. Bud if I can  
get t'maister on it, tha'll get t'benefit  
as mich as me. So give ower, an' let  
me study aht hah to frame when fowk  
pick it aht what's up wi' t'sweep.

*Sophy*—They'll neht be long a dewin'  
that ; fer tha's picked a reyt day to  
strike on. I heeard t'wind whistlin'  
threw that brocken windah i't' neet,  
an' Ah'll bet a bakin' o' breead 'at all  
t'chimleys o' t'benk side's puffin' aht  
onto t'harston this varry minit. Tha'd  
ha' been up theer this mornin' if this  
job hed'nt begun ?

*Rube*—Ah sud : Tha sez reyt.

*Sophy*—Varry weel then ; asteead o' differin' wi' me abaht nowt, thee leet thi pipe an' mack a bit o' rick thisen. An' wol tha'rt smokin' try to sattel wi' thisen what tha'rt bahn to chairge.

*Rube*—That's noan so easy as it lewks.

*Sophy*—Now, Ah knaw it is'nt. So tha'd better tackle it an' get it sattled afore someb'dy comes an' seeks the' up ; fer Ah's be capt if ther' is'nt someb'dy afore owt's long.

*Rube*—It's botherin' wi' that 'at macks meh a bit mahldy. Ah've hardly slept a wink all t'neet, thinkin' abaht it ; an' t'more Ah study t'farther Ah seem to get off it. Ther's so denged monny soarts. If they wor all just streyt two story flues, well, Ah could sattel it wi'a shillin' a chimley, an' t'sooit. But ther's these crewked uns 'at brecks yer brushes an' tack no end o' time ; an' then ther's them wi' t'fancy chimley pots on, 'at ye cahnt mack nowt on baht a stee an' gettin' on to t'hahse.

*Sophy*—Nah tha frames. That's t' way. Spreyd thi bother aht afore the' an' put a price on, hah mich tha'd like to

pay if t'chimleys wor thine an' somebody else swept 'em.

*Rube*—Well, Ah don't think Ah sud grum-mel to pay a shilling fer a common streyt flue wi' no pot on.

*Sophy*—Varry weel. Just wait a minit wol I get a bit o' paper, an' we'll put it dahn. (*Gets a pen and ink, and paper; the pen is scratchy and the ink bottle nearly empty.*) I'll put a shillin' fer a common streyt flue. Nah then, go on; what abaht t'crewked uns?

*Rube*—Ther's so monny sorts. Ah've said more ner once 'at t'architects owt to get ther heeards together an' saddle on some sort of a system o' crewkenin' chimleys; it 'ud save us chaps a seet o' trouble if they wod.

*Sophy*—They hev'nt. So does'nt ta think tha'd better lump all t' crewked uns i' one lot an' one price?

*Rube*—That woddent be reyt fair to me, ner to them 'at hed 'em, bud Ah do'nt see onny other way. Eighteen pence, Ah'm sewer, 'ud be no better pay ner a shillin' fer streyt uns.

*Sophy*—S'all wh call it eighteen pence, to get on?

*Rube*—Do'nt be i' sich a flutter Sophy, we moa'nt mack it less ner what Ah've gotten. Ther is 'at's gien mh two shillin', some o' them wi' a bit o' conscience. An if Ah mack it eighteen pence all rahnd, Ah loise bi sich as them.

*Sophy*—That's where thi system 'll breck dahn if tha are'nt careful. Is ther' more 'at pays the' two shillin' ner puts the' off wi' nine pence er a shillin'?

*Rube*—Nou, it's nobbut one nah an then 'at gies meh two shillin'!

*Sophy*—Wod eighteen pence all rahnd be a rise, er it woddent? that's t' point 'at we want to come at.

*Rube (studies a bit)*—Aw, aye.

*Sophy*—We'll say eighteen pence then.

*Rube*—Ah wish tha woddent be so fast Sophy. Is'nt ther' some soart of a way, thinks ta,'o' liftin' t'low dahn uns up, baht poolin t' heigh up uns dahn? That's what Ah've been tryin' to dew all t' neet.

*Sophy*—Aw, tha mud weel be so crabby this mornin'. It's a bigger job ner Ah tewk it to be. Some o' these reyt wiseacres mud a fun a way aht, but

Ah do'nt think 'at us two, if we put wer heeards together ivver so, could dew it. So come nah, just to get on. s'al Ah put it dahn eighteen pence fer crewked uns ? Er hah wod it be to put special bad uns one and ninepence?

*Rube*—Ah've thowt o' that bud it woddent lewk weel. Nou, put crewked uns dahn eighteen pence ; we can alter it at t'after if we pick a better way aht.

*Sophy (writing)*—All reyt, eighteen pence then. That all ?

*Rube*—All ? nou, it is'nt. Ah'm capped wi' thee Sophy. Wah, Ah've omost brocken mi neck time after time, wi' gettin' up to t'denged chimley pots. An' some on 'em's that fancy wol it 'ud cap a conjuror to finnd a way aht, nivver tell of a bit o' rick. An' then ther's them H pots ; dew as Ah will. nowt 'll dew bud a long stee, so as Ah can get reyt at 'em wi' a hand brush.

*Sophy*—Ah'll tack tull 't Ah'd clean fergetten t' pots. Come on then, what s'al wh put dahn extra fer t'pots ? S'al wh lump 'em sixpence more ?

*Rube*—Nou, that woddent be fair to them

'at hes just streyt pots, they 're no bother at all ; another rod 's all 'at they want. Bud wheer Ah've to get a stee an' climb up to t'top o' t'chimley, sixpence more's th little.

*Sophy*—S'al we say a shillin' er eighteen pence more ? tha knows t'best.

*Rube*—Nou, we moant raum, er Ah s'al sooin hev' another sweep to feyt. It's nobbut a monopoly as long as Ah hev' it to misen.

*Sophy*—Hah wod it be to put a shillin' extra wheer a stee 's used ?

*Rube*—Aye, that 'ud happen dew. Bud then ther' sud be summat extra agean fer crewked uns wi' H pots on ; they're the divil an' all to get at.

*Sophy*—What ! beside t' shillin' fer t'stee lot ?

*Rube*—Aye. Bud we can't dew it. Ther'd be to 'monny soarts, it'ud muddle fowk, an' mack so mich book keepin'.

*Sophy*—Ah thowt tha did it i'thi heead ?

*Rube*—Ah dew.

*Sophy*—It 'ud muddle *thee* i' thi *heead*, tha means, wi' hevin' to think on when tha'd gi'en 'em a bit o'strap ?

*Rube*—Aye, an them 'at owed it 'ud reckon to be muddled teh w, to get off payin'.

*Sophy*—All reyt (*writes*). Nah then. Hah does this sahnd? (*holds up paper and reads*) "Mr. Ruben Bussel presents his compliments."

*Rube*—Here, hold on, Strike that aht, It's that soart o' balderdash Ah'm strikin' agean as mich as owt.

*Sophy*—Hah hev' Ah to begin then?

*Rube*—Nay, Ah do'nt knaw; bud Ah'm noan bahn to soap fowk up i' that way.

*Sophy* (*after writing again*)—Wod this dew? "Mr. Ruben Bussel would rayther not sweep chimleys at all, an' if he sweeps yahrs it wea'nt be fer a haup'ny less ner a shillin' fer streyt uns an' eighteen pence fer—

*Rube*—Nay, deng it Sophy; Ah thowt tha wor tryin' to help meh, an' tha'rt just girnin' an' laughin' at meh all t' time.

*Sophy*—Ah'm dewin' nowt o' t'soart. Ah wor nobbut just tryin' to let the' hear what other fowk 'ud hear, if tha spack thi mind, an' what they'd see if they saw thi face this varry minit.

*(There is a knock at the door, Sophy goes to open it, and a child's voice is heard)*

*Child*—Is Mr. Bussel at home? Mi Mother wants to knaw if he's comin' to sweep ahr chimley? it's smokin' awful.

*Sophy*—Ah'll just see what he says (*turning to Rube*). It's Mrs. Chowley's little lass abaht t' chimley.

*Rube*—Ah heeard who it wor. Tell her Ah'm neht forced to come *to-day*, an' if Ah dew it'll be a shillin' an' t'sooit.

*Sophy (turning to the door)*—Mr. Bussel happen wo'nt be able to come *to-day* but if he does yer Mother mun hev' a shillin' ready for him to pay fer sweep-in'. (*Shuts the door and returns to table*).

*Rube*—Tha nivver mentioned t'sooit, an' they 've 'a garden. Tha's left meh wi' a bother theer if Ah go. Bud it does'nt matter, Ah'm noan bahn *to-day*.

*Sophy*—Nah, come on then abaht this bit of a bill heead, er price list, er whativver it sud be. Let's get it done wi'.

*Rube*—Tha knaws Ah'm no hand at puttin' owt together ; dew it as ta likes.

*Sophy* (*sitting down and writing again*)—Hah'll this dew ? On t' top, t' place, an't day o' t'month, an't'year. Thy name on t'next line at t'left hand side, an' under that "Chimley sweep."

Then below, t'soarts one after another dahn t'page, "Streyt uns, crewked uns, streyt uns wi' pots, crewked uns wi' pots, and so on. Then tha can draw a line across and put "a shillin' and t'sooit" anent t'streyt uns, "eighteen pence and ditto" fer crewked, and so on. Sorts at one side, and figures at t'other wheer t'brass is *ollus* put.

*Rube*—Ah think that'll dew. It is'nt worth while gettin' 'em printed. But they'd happen tack more notice on 'em if they wor.

*Sophy*—Aw, Ah'll write a score er two aht as sooin as Ah've time ; then tha can liver 'em aht to thi customers.

*Rube*—What ? To them 'at's paid meh more ? Noan soa.

*Sophy*—Wah, they'll get to know, then they happen wea'nt heh the' again.

*Rube*—It's no use Sophy, ther's no reyt freedom fer a workin' man.

*Sophy*—What's ta mean ?

*Rube*—Wah tha sees, if bi settin' mi back up Ah get a bit more fro them 'at could'nt thoil to pay mh afore, Ah hettah tack less fro t'reyt sort o' fowk.

*Sophy*—Is ther plenty o' t'reyt sort to keep the' agate ?

*Rube*—Nou, ther' is'nt.

*Sophy*—Tha's no option then. Tha'll hettah tackle t'wasters an' bring 'em up to t'scratch, an' trust to t'reyt sort givin' the' a bit extra. When tha sweeps fer one o' them' tha mun ollus be careful to blacken thisen up, an' pool a long miserable face ; an' if tha hauf chokes wi' sooit it mud help. But Ah think Ah can trust the' fer bein' miserable an' grumpy. Ther' is another way. A chap 'at used to sweep fer us when Ah wor at home, hed ollus some sort of a gurt raumin' tale, 'at made us laugh, an' so we all liked him, an' he gat weel paid an' a nice brekfast. But it's no use, tha cuddent manage that way, so ther's nowt for't but to stick to t'miserable side fer thee.

*Rube*—Does'nt ta think tha'd better go wi' mh, fer tha could tell t'tale if Ah could'nt. Then we sud hev 'em as hah t'cat jumped. Thee wi' thi drolery an' me wi' mi misery.

*Sophy*—Ger aht wi' the'; tha knaws what Ah mean. (*A knock at the door is heard*). Bud who's that? (*She opens the door and the same piping voice is heard as before*).

*Child*—Mi Mother sent meh to tell yeh to tell Mr. Bussel 'at shoo says he's no cayshun to come, shoo's done baht him,

*Sophy*—(*Turning to Rube.*) T'little lass for Chowley's says—

*Rube*—I heeard her. Ass her hah shoo's done it (*aside*). Neht 'at I care.

*Sophy*—(*Calling to the girl.*) An' hah ye swept it? Who's done it?

*Child*—Little Billy Button's done it wi' a berry tree.

*Sophy*—All reyt (*closes the door*). T' lass says little Billy Button's done it wi' a berry tree.

*Rube*—Aye? An' Ah wonder who he's gotten to prop yon wall up i' t' tahn gate for him. That's his regler job.

*Sophy*—(*Anxiously*). Bud hah if he goes an' does a lot on 'em? happen fer thripence or sixpence an' no sooit.

*Rube*—He'll noan dew so monny afore he's his fit under t'table i' t'Pipes Tap Rahm, an' a pint o' ale afore him; an' once he gets a sneck lifter he'll noan stir fer all t'chimleys i' England. Billy's on t'hey road to be drukken to neet.

*Sophy*—Tha seems to tack it varry cheerfully. Ah do'nt like it at all. Onny-hah, it's swept.

*Rube*—In a feshun. An' Billy er onnybody else is welcome to sweep fer Mrs. Chowley; t'varry last time Ah did it we gat to hey words ower t'sooit. Bud Ah'd gotten it intut t'seck, so Ah browt it away an' let her dew as shoo'd a mind abaht it.

*Sophy*—It's a bad job fer t'Union, that's all Ah know. (*another knock at the door*). Who's this ivver? (*opens it and speaks*) Well, what is it mi lass? (*Another child's voice is heard*).

*Child*—Mi Mother's send meh to ax if t'sweep 's bahn to come as he promised? An' Ah hed to say 'at if he is'nt sharp shoo'll get some'dy else.

*Sophy*—(*turning to Rube*) It's Margit lass  
fro t'Cross Pipes.

*Rube*—I hear. Just ax her who shoo'll  
get to dew it ?

*Sophy*—(*to the girl*). Aye mi lass, an'  
who'll dew it ?

*Child*—Billy Button says he'll dew it fer  
a quairt o' ale an' sixpence.

*Rube*—(*In a temper, jumps up and goes to-  
wards the door*) Tell thi Mother to-

*Sophy*—(*puts out her hand and motions him  
back*) Nah, thee sit the' dahn, Ah'm  
t'door keeper. (*in a whisper*) Is it a  
crewked un ?

*Rube*—(*quietly*) Aye, one o' t'warst ; an'  
a pot on an' all.

*Sophy*—All reyt. (*to the girl*) Tell yer  
Mother 'at Mr. Bussel ca'nt come to-  
day, an' 'at if shoo's i' that split shoo'd  
better get t'other gentleman to dew it.  
(*shuts the door, and comes back into  
room*). What'll shoo dew, thinks ta ?

*Rube*—Aw, shoo's a short tempered un, is  
Margit, shoo'll let him try. Bud he'll  
hev' a job. He'll hev' to get onto t'top  
o' t'chimley, an' when he drops t'  
stone dahn, it'll go a bit, an' if he's  
lucky it mud slur dahn t'slopin' pairt

an' intut t'range, bud if Billy's berry tree 's onny bu'k at all, it'll tack him all his time to dreg it threw, An' ther'll be sich a mullock i' that hoil as'll cap Margit. Tha did reyt to tell her to tell her Mother to let Billy dew it ; it's noan a berry tree job, is'nt Margits. Noan so. An' if Billy gets his quairt o'ale afore he starts o't' job it's level bettin' 'at they'll find him laid i' t'back yard, an' then they'll hettah get someb'dy else to 'tice t'berry tree dahn t'chimley, an' then they'll lewk grand. Nou. Sit the' dahn, we're all reyt yet.

*Sophy*—But t'warst on't is they'll blame thee.

*Rube*—Hah can they dew that ?

*Sophy*—Wah, t'lass said tha promised.

*Rube*—Aye, to go sometime, bud neht just t'minit they bethowt 'em to send for meh. That's just t'tyranee 'At Ah'm strikin' agean.

*Sophy*—Is ther' onny wheer else 'at tha'd ha' goan tull to-day, if tha hed'nt been on t'strike ?

*Rube*—Ah awf promised Ah'd sweep t'parson's Chimley. Bud they'll wait.

*Sophy*—Tha doesn't think they'll let Billy

Button try his hand wi' a berry tree theer ?

*Rube*—Nou, Ah'm sewer they wea'nt. They'd be flaid of a stickfast doo theer, an' then ther's nowt bud settin' t' chimley afire, an' if they dew that they'll be fined. An' t'Parson'd noan lewk so grand tackin' tul 't i' t' court 'at to save eighteen pence fer t'sweep, he'd let a novice try to dreg a berry tree dahn t'chimley, an' they'd been forced to set it hod to burn t'berry tree an' t'sooit together, er smoor i' t'hoil. Of course if he's reyt threng wi' his sarmon, ther's no tellin' what mud happen.

*Sophy*—Come on nah, then, an' hev' a bit of a snack. Tha wea'nt want mich as tha ar'nt workin', but tha moa'nt pine.

*Rube*—Aw, Ah do'nt knaw abaht that ; it's a hungry job is thinkin' an' Ah'm neht used tul't. Ah can feel mi heead all of a jotter bi nah, an' it's nobbut just after twelve.

*Sophy*—Ther's nowt like pinin' fer clearin' thi heead. But get summat if it's nobbut a bitin' on. (*she makes him a pot of tea, and gives him bread and jam. While he is getting it a cry is heard outside.*)

*Billy B.—(indistinct at first, then becoming louder).* Onny chimleys want sweepin'.  
T'sweep, T'sweep, Onny chimleys want sweepin'.

*Rube—(in a rage)* Who the hengment's that? comin' an' mockin' meh at mi varry door. That's what I call impidence. An' nobody knaws 'at Ah'm neht aht as us'al. Tha hes'nt let it aht?

*Sophy*—Hah could Ah let it aht? Ah hev'nt spockken to a wick soul nobbut t'two lasses 'at's been at ta door.

*Billy—(getting louder)* T' sweep, t'sweep, t'sweep, onny chimleys wants sweepin' t'sweep, t'sweep, onny chimleys wants sweepin'?

*Rube*—This is awful. Bud Ah'll sooin know who's tryin to dew mh dahn, an' tack mi bit o'livin, er else is humbuggin' an' laughin' at meh. An' if it's who I think it is, Ah'll tan his hide for him, as sure as my name's Bussel!  
*(goes towards the door).*

*Sophy—(looking out of the window, then turning to Rube)* It's nobbut little Billy. He's a bit fresh Ah think. Tack no notice on him, it'll be t'best way.

*Rube*—It's no use Sophy, Ah' can stand a bit of a joke wi' onnybody, bud Ah'm strung up this mornin'. (*Sophy stands in front of him, but he pushes her aside.*)

*Sophy*—Well, go then, but keep thi temper, Sewerly we've no cayshun to be flaid of owt 'at Billy'll dew.

*Rube*—Ah know what Ah'm dewin'. (*Goes out, Sophy watches anxiously out of the window. In a short time Rube comes back bringing Billy in his arms, Billy struggling, Rube puts him down on floor and stands over him.*) Nah, tha can lig there, er get up an' sit on a chair, just as tha's a mind, bud tha'll hettah tell me, afore tha goes aht o' here, what tha means comin' shahtin' "t' sweep" past my hahse.

*Billy*—Tha ar'nt bahn to leather mh then? If tha wea'nt Ah'll tell the' owt tha wants to know. (*gets up*) AW! abaht shahtin' "t'sweep"; it's that tha'rt so mad abaht. Aw, Ah've been reyt on t'job to-day. Do'nt blame me. It wor Nancy Chowley, shoo wod heh mh go an' dew it. Ah wor stood as sackless as owt i' t'tahn gate, waitin' fer a job, tired o'laikin'—

*Sophy*—It does tire fowk then, does laikin'?

*Billy*—Eh, Mrs. Bussel, ye're a sharp un, ye are.

*Rube*—(*impatiently*) Go on wi' thi tale.

*Billy*—Weel onnyah, Ah wor stood i' t'tahn gate when shoo comm an' axed meh if Ah cud sweep a chimley ! Nay, Ah said, " ye mun go to Rube Bussel." " Neht Ah, marry," shoo said, reyt snappy, " he's hed his chance, could ta dew it ? " " It 'ud be i' t'owd fesh'nd way, if Ah did," Ah said. " Dew it as ta likes, nobbut dew it," shoo said. " All reyt " Ah said, " Ah'll try." So Ah gat a stone an' a gooseberry tree an' a rope, as Ah'd seen 'em dew when Ah wor a lad. An when Ah'd gotten t'rope fast to t'stone an' t'berry tree Ah telled Nancy to lewk aht, as Ah wor bahn to start. Ther' wor a stee just across t'street, of owd Splash-dashes t'plaisterer, so Ah fetched it, an' in a varry fehew minits Ah wor on t' hahse. Then Ah dropt t'stone dahn, an' put t'berry tree ready on t'top o't'chimley. It's no pot on.

*Rube*—Nou, Ah knaw.

*Billy*—Then Ah went dahn. T'hiol wor

full o' sooit, an' Nancy nearly choked ragein' 'cos shoo said Ah sud ha' gien her warnin' afore Ah dropt t'stone.

*Rube*—Hed ta no sheet up i' front o' t'fire ?

*Billy*—Nou, Ah left that to Nancy to dew.

*Rube*—An' shoo hed'nt done it ?

*Billy*—Neht shoo, An' shoo blamed me.

Bud shoo knew Ah'd no sheet. Ah tewk no notice on her, but groped at t'back o' t' fire wol Ah fahn t' stone. Then Ah pooled an' pooled, om'most smooed, sooit comin' faster an' faster, woll i' t'end t'berry tree comm tumlin' on' t'top on mh, "Nah" Ah said, "It's done." Well, shoo wor blazin' mad, wor Nancy. "What yeh bahn to gie meh," Ah said, fer Ah saw Ah mud get aht o' t'shop : "Gie the'" shoo said, "if Ah gah tha' what tha deserves it 'ud be a gooid hidin'." "Coom nah" Ah said, "it's worth a shillin.' Ah cah'nt get clean for mich less." "A shillin'" shoo ses, "wah, Ah nivver paid a shillin' i' mi life. Tak this," it wor a sixpence, "An' tha'rt weel paid." "All reyt," Ah said, "Ah's live an' leearn. But Ah' want t'berry tree," Ah said. An' shoo

wor that mad wol shoo tewk t'stone  
an' berry tree an' flang em' ower mi  
heead intut t'street.

*Rube*—An' tha left her to samm t'sooit  
up ? Wor ther' a lot ?

*Billy*—A lot ? It wor all ower t'shop,  
Ah do'nt knaw hah thick ; an' Ah sud  
think Ah'd swaller'd a seckful misen,  
bi' t'feel on't.

*Sophy*—But bad as it wor, tha went on wi'  
t'job ?

*Billy*—Aye, begum Ah did. Bud Ah sud-  
dent if t'landlady o't Cross Pipes  
hed'nt seen mh an' pressed meh inta  
t'job. "Nay, Ah've hed eniff" Ah  
said, "an' Ah do'nt want to dew Rube  
aht of his job." It wor trew an' all.  
"Rube !" shoo said, "Rube's stupid  
as a pot mule."

*Rube*—Did shoo say that ?

*Billy*—As trew as Ah'm set here. Bud  
tha moa'nt blab on meh.

*Rube*—Nou. Go on. Ah want to hear  
hah tha went on at t'Pipes.

*Billy*—Aw, war ner ivver. Well, Ah  
stuck aht' at if Ah did it Ah sud hev' a  
quairt o' ale afore Ah started an' six-  
pence when Ah'd done. Ah'd noan

fergetten Nancy. They held aht fer meh dewin' it fer sixpence, baht ale, bud Ah woddent, so they browt t'ale an' Ah sooin made sewer o' that. T'ale brisken'd meh up a bit, an' Ah went aht to t' back an' gat a fresh stone an' another berry tree, rayther bigger ner this. Then Ah fan' a pair o' steps an' climb'd onto t'back hoil an' fro theer to t'roof. When Ah gat to t'chimley—eh, Ah hed a job to climb up, so as Ah cud drop t'stone dahn, bud Ah did it i' t' end, an' it seem'd to go all reyt. Then Ah put t'fancy brush intu t'chimley pot, an' shahted "It's ready, pool." But just then Ah do'nt knaw whether it wor me shahtin', er mi fooit 'at slipped, bud dahn Ah fell off t'chimley, an' begow, Ah set off rollin' an' nivver stopped wol Ah fahn misen i't'midden at t'back o' t'stable. It seems Ah'd rolled dahn t'roof, browt t'spaht wi' meh on to t' low hoil, an' then rowled dahn it an' dropped. Ah think Ah must ha let o'mi heead, bud Ah'm neht sewer.

*Sophy*—Lucky tha did er tha mud ha' been killed.

*Billy*—It wor. Aw, Ah cudden dew it agean.

*Rube*—Tha'll noan try ?

*Billy*—Nou, nawther fer ale ner brass. Bud as Ah wor tellin' yeh, Ah sammed misen up, an' faced intu t'kitchen. Ah cud hardly see across t'koil.

*Sophy*—Wor t'landlady theer ?

*Billy*—Shoo wor, an' shoo blazed intu mh just same as Nancy hed done. "Margit" Ah said, "ye've setten meh agate, hev'nt yeh" Begow, Ah thowt, it is'nt all chops an' apple pie, is'nt this job, bud Ah'll face it aht. "Stand aht o' t'gate," Ah said to Margit, "Stand aht o' t'gate thisen," shoo said. "Rube could dew it baht all this mess, hah is it tha could'nt." "Ah telled yeh to get him, did'nt Ah ? Bud Ah'm noan done yet." So Ah groped an' fahn t'stone an' pooled. Well, ther must ha' been cart loads o'sooit, fer it flew aht like a clahd. Then lo an' behold Ah couldnt get it no farther, t'berry tree hed stuck somewheer.

*Rube*—Capital ! Tip top ! An' tha could'nt get it no farther ?

*Billy*—Nou, Ah could'nt get it dahn, an' both me an' t'ostler poolin' fer all wer meet could'nt stir it. But we stirred summat, fer t'rope brack i' t'end, an' we flew all of a heap i' t'middle o' t'floor. But it wor'nt "Capital" as tha calls it fer me, fer t'landlord happened to come in, an' when he fan' aht what wor up, he just intul't an' pawsed meh aht o' t'hoil. An' theer Ah wor, at t'doorstones, t'job hauf finished, me no sixpence, an' Ah durs'nt go back an' ass for it.

*Sophy*—Hah did ta dew then ?

*Billy*—Dew ? Ther wor nobbut one way. Ah tewk Nancy's sixpence, an' went to t'Smlin' Mule, an' gat another quairt o'ale. Then Ah felt a bit livlier, so Ah bethowt meh Ah'd hev a bit of a maylock wi' thee, an' comm shahtin' dahn t'tahn as ye heeard meh.

*Sophy*—Tha hes'nt reyt fallen i'love wi' t'job then ?

*Billy*—Me ? Nou. Ah'm noan so fond o' wark o' no soart.

*Sophy*—That's what fowk sez, bud Ah thowt tha'd happen fun summat to thi likin' at last.

*Billy*—Chimley sweepin' ? Wah, it's sich jobs as these at's to blame fer mackin' sich idlebacks as me. Ye've noticed 'at Ah'm a bit shy abaht wark, an' yeh blame meh. Other fowk blame mh, Ah know they dew, if they say nowt ; an' they'll hettah go on blamin' meh, if Ah can get nowt bud chimley sweep-in'. It is'nt man's wark. If I'd my way, ahstead o' sendin' fowk to t'hoil, Ah'd mack 'em sweep chimleys, empty middins, an' all sich like mucky jobs. It 'ud be better ner donnin' 'em-i' prison cloas, an' hevin' a parson to preych tu 'em. T'middins an't chimleys 'ud ettah dew t'preychin', an' save t'parson's wage.

*Sophy*—Eh Billy, tha's more i' the 'ner Ah thowt tha hed. Tha'rt just t'man we're wantin'.

*Rube*—*Sophy*. What's ta mean ? What hes ta agate ?

*Sophy*—Nowt mich. Leave it to me, Ah see dayleet.

*Rube*—Bud—

*Sophy*—Bud nowt. Cah'nt ta wait a min-it ?

*Rube*—Nah then, heh thi way.

*Sophy*—(to *Billy*) Hah monny berry trees  
can tha get ?

*Billy*—Aw, as monny as Ah like, bud  
what for ?

*Sophy*—To sweep chimleys wi' of course,  
does ta think Ah want 'em to grow  
berries fer pies an' jam ? Well, they  
mud dew that when they've travelled  
dahn a chimley or two, bud it's fer  
t'chimleys Ah want 'em, hahivver t'  
berries go on. Ah can see the' row-  
lin' thi een ower, an' thee an' all Rube.  
Bud thee just harken, Billy. 'Tha did'  
nt knaw 'at Rube wor on t'strike ?

*Billy*—Nou. 'Tha ar'nt, are ta Rube ?

*Rube*—(sulkily) Aw, aye, it's true Ah am.

*Billy*—Eh ! if Ah'd knawn Ah'd nivver

*Sophy*—What ? 'Tha could'nt ha' done  
better ner tha hez, if tha'd knawn ivver  
so. 'Tha's shewn two on 'em, neht  
just what a foil tha art, but what a  
clever chap Rube is. Duz ta think  
Nancy er Margit 'll send for the'  
agean ?

*Billy*—Neht i' a hurry. Nou. An Ah  
durs'nt go near t'Pipes wol they've  
gotten t'tree aht o' t'chimley.

*Sophy*—Varry weel, they're nobbut two,

but they've two long tongues, hes Nancy an' Margit, an't'berry tree i' t'chimley 'll hev a tongue as long as 'em both. Ah do'nt care if they hev' t'hahse to pool dahn to get it aht. But this is what Ah'm comin' tull. (*to Billy*) Tha's hed a roughish day to-day, strike breckin' ; plenty o' mucky wark an' little fer dew'n' it. If tha likes tha can hev' another day at t'same racket to morn. Ah do'nt think it's needed, fer Nancy an' Marget an' t'berry tree'll dew it, but tha can hev' it, if tha likes (*to Rube*). Cah'nt he ?

*Rube*—(*smiling*) Aye, if he likes ; an' be paid an' all.

*Sophy*—Bud whether or neht, we're so pleased wi' what tha's done to-day that if tha'll go dahn home an' wesh a layer er two o' that sooit off, an' get yahr Tilda intut mind to come wi' the', we'll hev' a tip top drinkin' ready for yeh. Ham an' eggs an' pasty, an' a drop o' summat to mack it digest. What's ta say ?

*Billy*—Hurray ! Ah'm on. An' Tilda'll come. Shoo gets doos seldom eniff (*capers about*) What abaht t'berry tree ?

*Rube*—Aw, we'll keep that, if tha's no special use for it.

*Billy*—Hurray ! Ah'm off. (*goes to door*).

*Sophy*—Do'nt be so long.

*Billy*—No fear ! (*exit*).

*Sophy*—Nah then, Rube ; just drop it thinkin', an' get the' washed an' ready for Billy an' t'wife. Ah didn't think so mich o' thi strike this mornin', but it's just going grand. Off tha goes. Get aht o' mi gate. Fer Ah's hev' wark eniff to keep mi promise to Billy. (*exit Rube, and Sophy starts tidying up*).

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